

THE WHIRLWIND.

FROM "ROUGHING IT IN THE BUSH," BY MRS. MOODIE.

The 19th of August came, and our little harvest was all safely housed. Business called Moodie away for a few days to Cobourg. Jenny had gone to Dummer, to visit her friends, and J. E—— had taken a grist of the new wheat, which he and Moodie had threshed the day before, to the mill. I was consequently left alone with the children, and had a double portion of work to do. During their absence it was my lot to witness the most awful storm I ever beheld, and a vivid recollection of its terrors was permanently fixed upon my memory.

The weather had been intensely hot during the three preceding days, although the sun was entirely obscured by a blueish haze, which seemed to render the unusual heat of the atmosphere more oppressive. Not a breath of air stirred the vast forest, and the waters of the lake assumed a leaden hue. After passing a sleepless night, I arose, a little after daybreak, to superintend my domestic affairs. E—— took his breakfast, and went off to the mill, hoping that the rain would keep off until after his return.

"It is no joke," he said, "being upon these lakes in a small canoe, heavily laden, in a storm."

Before the sun rose, the heavens were covered with hard-looking clouds, of a deep blue and black cast, fading away to white at their edges, and in form, resembling the long, rolling waves of a heavy sea—but with this difference, that the clouds were perfectly motionless, piled in long curved lines, one above the other, and so remained until four o'clock in the afternoon. The appearance of these clouds, as the sun rose above the horizon, was the most splendid that can be imagined, tinged up to the zenith with every shade of saffron, gold, rose color, scarlet and crimson, fading away into the deepest violet. Never did the storm-fiend shake in the face of day a more gorgeous banner; and, pressed as I was for time, I stood gazing, like one entranced, upon the magnificent pageant.

As the day advanced, the same blue haze obscured the sun, which frowned redly through his misty veil. At ten o'clock the heat was suffocating, and I extinguished the fire in the cooking-stove, determined to make our meals upon bread and milk, rather than add to the oppressive heat. The thermometer, in the shade, ranged from ninety-six to ninety-eight degrees, and I gave over my work and retired with the little ones to the coolest part of the house. The young creatures stretched themselves upon the floor, unable to jump about or play; the dog lay panting in the shade; the fowls half buried themselves in the dust, with open beaks and outstretched wings. All nature seemed to droop beneath the scorching heat.

Unfortunately for me, a gentleman arrived about one o'clock from Kingston, to transact some business with my husband. He had not tasted food since six o'clock, and I was obliged to kindle the fire to prepare his dinner. It was one of the hardest tasks I ever performed; I almost fainted with the heat, and most inhospitably rejoiced when his dinner was over, and I saw him depart.

Shortly afterwards, my friend, Mrs. C——, and her brother called in, on their way from Peterborough.

"How do you bear the heat?" asked Mrs. C——. "This is one of the hottest days I ever remember to have experienced in this part of the province. I am afraid that it will end in a hurricane, or what the Lower Canadians term 'L'Orage.'"

About four o'clock they rose to go. I urged them to stay longer. "No," said Mrs. C——, "the sooner we get home the better. I think we can reach it before the storm breaks."

I took Donald in my arms, and my eldest boy by the hand, and walked with them to the brow of the hill, thinking that the air would be cooler in the shade. In this I was mistaken. The clouds over our heads hung so low, and the heat was so great, that I was soon glad to retrace my steps.

The moment I turned round to face the lake, I was surprised at the change that had taken place in the appearance of the heavens. The clouds, that had before lain so motionless, were now in rapid motion, hurrying and chasing each other round in the horizon. It was a strangely awful sight. Before I felt a breath of the mighty blast that had already burst on the other side of the lake, branches of trees, leaves, and clouds of dust were whirled across the lake, whose waters rose in long sharp furrows, fringed with foam, as if moved in their depths by some unseen but powerful agent.

Panting with terror, I just reached the door of the house as the hurricane swept up the hill, crushing and overturning everything in its course. Spell-bound, I stood at the open door, with clasped hands, unable to speak, rendered dumb and motionless by the terrible grandeur of the scene; while little Donald, who could not utter many intelligible words, crept to my feet, appealing to me for protection, while his rosy cheeks paled even to marble whiteness. The hurrying clouds gave to the heavens the appearance of a pointed dome, round which the lightning played in broad ribbons of fire. The roaring of the thunder, the rushing of the blast, the impetuous down-pouring of the rain, and the crash of falling trees, were perfectly deafening; and in the midst of this uproar of the elements, old Jenny burst in, drenched with wet, and half dead with fear.

"The Lord preserve us!" she cried, "this surely is the day of judgment. Fifty trees fell across my very path, between this an' the creek. Mrs. C—— just reached her brother's clearing a few minutes before a great oak fell on her very path. What thunther!—what lightning! Mischance, dear!—it's turn'd so dark, I can only just see yer face."

Glad enough was I of her presence; for to be alone in the heart of the great forest, in a log hut, on such a night, was not a pleasing prospect. People gain courage by companionship, and in order to reassure each other, struggle to conceal their fears.

"And where is Mr. E——?"

"I hope not on the lake. He went early this morning to get the wheat ground at the mill."

"Och, the crathur! He's surely drowned. What boat could stan' such a scrimmage as this?"

I had my fears for poor John; but as the chance that he had to wait at the mill till others were served was more than probable, I tried to still my apprehensions for his safety. The storm soon passed over, after having levelled several acres of wood near the house, and smitten down in its progress two gigantic pines in the clearing, which must have withstood the force of a thousand winters. Talking over the effects of this whirlwind with my brother, he kindly sent me the following very graphic description of a whirlwind which passed through the town of Guelph in the summer of 1829.

"In my hunting excursions and rambles through the Upper Canadian forests, I had frequently met with extensive wind-falls; and observed with some surprise that the fallen trees lay strewn in a succession of circles, and evidently appeared to have been twisted off the stumps. I also remarked that these wind-falls were generally narrow, and had the appearance of a road slashed through the forest. From observations made at the time, and since confirmed, I have no doubt that Colonel Reid's theory of storms is a correct one, viz., that all wind-storms move in a circular direction, and the nearer the centre, the more violent the force of the wind. Having seen the effects of several similar hurricanes since my residence in Canada West, I shall proceed to describe one which happened in the township of Guelph during the early part of the summer of 1829.

"The weather, for the season of the year (May), had been hot and sultry, with scarcely a breath of wind stirring. I had heard distant thunder from an early hour in the morning, which, from the eastward, is rather an unusual occurrence. About 10 A. M., the sky had a most singular, and I must add a most awful appearance, presenting to the view a vast arch of rolling blackness, which seemed to gather strength and density as it approached the zenith. All at once the clouds began to work round in circles, as if chasing one another through the air. Suddenly the dark arch of clouds appeared to break up into detached masses, whirling and mixing through each other in dreadful commotion. The forked lightning was incessant, accompanied by heavy thunder. In a short time, the clouds seemed to converge to a point, which approached very near the earth, still whirling with great rapidity directly under this point; and apparently from the midst of the woods arose a black column, in the shape of a cone, which instantly joined itself to the depending cloud. The sight was now grand and awful in the extreme. Picture to your imagination a vast column of smoke, of inky blackness, reaching from earth to heaven, gyrating with fearful velocity—bright lightnings issuing from the vortex; the roar of the thunder—the rushing of the blast—the crash of timber—the limbs of trees, leaves, and rubbish, mingled with clouds of dust, whirling through the air;—you then have a faint idea of the scene.

"I had ample time for observation, as the hurricane commenced its devastating course about two miles from the town, through the centre of which it took its way, passing within fifty yards of where a number of persons, myself among the rest, were standing, watching its fearful progress.

"As the tornado approached, the trees seemed to fall like a pack of cards before its irresistible current. After passing through the clearing made around the village, the force of the wind gradually abated, and in a few minutes died away entirely.

"As soon as the storm was over, I went to see the damage it had done. From the point where I first observed the black column to rise from the woods and join the clouds, the trees were twisted in every direction. A belt of timber had been levelled to the ground, about two miles in length and about one hundred yards in breadth. At the entrance of the town it crossed the river Speed, and uprooted about six acres of wood, which had been thinned out, and left by Mr. Galt (late superintendent of the Canada Company), as an ornament to his house.

"The Eremosa road was completely blocked up for nearly half-a-mile, in the wildest confusion possible. In its progress through the town, the storm unroofed several houses, levelled many fences to the ground, and entirely demolished a frame barn. Windows were dashed in; and, in one instance, the floor of a log house was carried through the roof. Some hair-breadth escapes occurred; but, luckily, no lives were lost.

"About twelve years since a similar storm occurred in the north part of the township of Dour, but was of much less magnitude. I heard an intelligent settler, who resided some years in the township of Madoc, state that, during his residence in that township, a similar hurricane to the one I have described, though of a much more awful character, passed through a part of Marmora and Madoc, and had been traced, in a north-easterly direction, upwards of forty miles into the unsurveyed lands: the uniform width of which appeared to be three quarters of a mile.

"It is very evident, from the traces which they have left behind them, that storms of this description have not been unfrequent in the wooded districts of Canada; and it becomes a matter of interesting consideration whether the clearing of our immense forests will not, in a great measure, remove the cause of these phenomena."

A few minutes after our household had retired to rest, my first sleep was broken by the voice of J. E——, speaking to old Jenny in the kitchen. He had been overtaken by the storm, but had run his canoe ashore upon an island before its full fury burst, and turned it over the flour; while he had to brave the terrors of a pitiless tempest—buffeted by the wind, and drenched with torrents of rain. I got up and made him a cup of tea, while Jenny prepared a rasher of bacon and eggs for his supper.

ESQUIMAUX TRACES.

[From Lieut. Osborn's "Stray Leaves from an Arctic Journal," just published by Putnam, we take the following:—]

I will now, with the reader's permission, carry him back to a subject that here and there has been cursorily alluded to throughout these pages—the Esquimaux traces and ruins, everywhere found by us, and the extraordinary chain of evidence which, commencing in Melville Island, our farthest west, carries us, link by link, to the isolated inhabitants of North Greenland, yclept Arctic Highlands.

Strange and ancient signs were found by us in almost every sheltered nook on the seaboard of this sad and solitary land,—signs indubitably of a race having once existed, who have either decayed away, or else, more probably, migrated to more hospitable portions of the Arctic zone. That all these traces were those of the houses, caches, hunting-posts, and graves of the Esquimaux, or Innuits, there could be on our minds no doubt; and looking to the immense extent of land over which this extraordinary race of fishermen have been, and are to be found, well might Captain Washington, the talented compiler of the Esquimaux vocabulary, say, that they are one "of the most widely-spread nations of the globe."

The seat of this race (arguing from traditions extant during Baron Wrangell's travels in Siberia) might be placed in the northeast extreme of Asia, the western boundary being ill-defined; for on the dreary banks of the Lena and Indigirka, along the whole extent of the frozen *Tundra*, which faces the Polar Sea, and in the distant isles of New Siberia, rarely visited by even the bold seekers of fossil ivory, the same ruined circles of stone, betokening the former abode of human beings, the same whalebone rafters, the same stone axes, the same implements of the chase, are to be found as to this day are used, and only used, by the Tchukches of Behring's Straits, the Innuits of North America, or the Esquimaux of Hudson's Straits and Greenland,—a people identical in language, (of which they all speak different dialects), habits, and disposition.

Supposing, then, that from the east of Asia these people first migrated to the American continent, and thence, eventually wandered to the eastern shores of Greenland, it became an interesting question to us, how the lands upon our northern hand, in our passage to the west up Barrow's Strait, should bear such numerous marks of human location, whereas upon the southern side they were comparatively scarce; and how the natives residing in the northern portion of Baffin's Bay should have been ignorant that their brethren dwelt in great numbers southward of the glaciers of Melville Bay.

Some amongst us—and I was of this number—objected to the theory summarily advanced, that at a remote period these northern lands had been peopled from the south, and that the population had perished or wasted away from increased severity of climate or diminution of the means of subsistence. Our objections were argued on the following grounds:—If the Parry group had been colonized from the American con-

continent, that continent, their nursery, would have shown signs of a large population at points immediately in juxtaposition, which it does not do.

From the estuary of the Coppermine to the Great Fish River, the Esquimaux traces are less numerous than on the north shore of Barrow's Strait. To assert that the Esquimaux have travelled from the American continent to the bleak shores of Bathurst Island, is to suppose a savage capable of voluntarily quitting a land of plenty for one of gaunt famine: on the other hand, it seems unreasonable to attribute these signs of a by-gone people's existence to some convulsion of nature, or some awful increase of cold, since no similar catastrophe has occurred in any other part of the world. Contrary to such opinions, we opined that the traces were those of a vast and prolonged emigration, and that it could be shown, on very fair premises, that a large number of the Innuits, Skraelings, or Esquimaux—call them what you please—had travelled from Asia to the eastward along a much higher parallel of latitude than the American continent, and, in their very natural search for the most hospitable region, had gone from the north towards the south, not from the south towards the north, or, what may yet one day be laid open to the world, reached a high northern latitude, in which a deep and uncongealable sea gives rise to a milder climate and an increased amount of the capabilities of subsistence.

I will now lightly sketch the probable route of the Esquimaux emigration, as I believe it to have taken place in the northeast of Asia. The Tchuktches, the only independent tribe in Siberia, are seen to assume, amongst that portion of them residing on the sea-coast, habits closely analogous to those of the Esquimaux. The hunters of Siberia tell how a similar race, the Omoki, "whose hearths were once more numerous on the banks of the Lena than the stars of an Arctic night," are gone, none know whither. The natives now living in the neighborhood of Cape Chelajskoi, in Siberia, aver that emigration to a land in the northeast had occurred within the memory of their fathers; and amongst other cases, we find them telling Wrangell, that the Onkillon tribe had once occupied that land, but, being attacked by the Tchuktches, they, headed by a chief called Krachnoi, had taken shelter in the land visible northward from Cape Jakan.

This land, Wrangell and others did not then believe in. British seamen have, however, proved the assertion to be a fact; and Captains Kellett and Moore have found "an extensive land" in the very direction the Siberian fishermen declared it to exist. It is not my purpose to enter into a disquisition upon the causes which brought about this emigration. Sad and bitter necessity alone it must have been which thrust these poor members of the human family into localities which, even in Asia, caused the Russians to exclaim, "What could have led men to forsake more favored lands for this grave of Nature?" Choice it could not have been, for, in America, we see that the Esquimaux has struggled hard to reach southern and genial climes. In the Aleutian Isles, and on the coast of Labrador, local circumstances favored the attempt, and the Indian

hunter was unable to subsist in lands which were, comparatively, overflowing with subsistence for the Arctic fishermen; but elsewhere the bloodthirsty races of North America obliged the human tide, which for some wise cause was made to roll along the margin of the Polar Sea, to confine itself purely to the sea-coast; and although vast tracts, such as the barren grounds between longitudes 99° and 109° W., are at the present day almost untenanted, still a sufficient population remains to show that an emigration of these tribes had taken place there at a remote period.

These people reached, in time, the shores of Davis's Straits and the Atlantic Ocean; and, in a line parallel to them, others of their brethren who reached the land lately rediscovered, northward of Behring's Straits, may have likewise wandered along the Parry Group to Lancaster Sound.

In order to have done this, land must be presumed to extend from the meridian of Behring's Straits to Melville Island—a point upon which few who study the geography of that region can have now a doubt; and eminent men have long supposed it to be the case, from various phenomena, such as the shallow nature of the sea between the Mackenzie River and Behring's Straits, and the non-appearance of heavy ice in that direction—all indicating that a barrier lay northward of the American continent. The gallant squadron, under Captains Collinson and M'Clure, will, doubtless, solve this problem, and connect, either by a continent or a chain of islands, the ruined *yurts* of Cape Jakan with the time-worn stone huts of Melville Island.

Situated, as these places are, under the same degree of latitude, the savage, guided by the length of his seasons and the periodical arrival of bird and beast, would fearlessly progress along the north shore of the great Strait, which may be said to extend from Lancaster Sound to the Straits of Behring. This progress was, doubtless, a work of centuries, but gradual, constant, and imperative. The seal, the reindeer, and the whale, all desert or avoid places where man or beast wages war on them whilst multiplying their species, and have to be followed, as we find to be the case with our hunters, sealers, and whalers of the present day.

As the northern Esquimaux travelled to the east, offshoots from the main body no doubt struck to the southward. For instance, there is every reason to believe Boothia to have been originally peopled from the north. The natives seen there by Sir John Ross spoke of their fathers having fished and lived in more northern lands. They described the shores of North Somerset sufficiently to show that they knew that it was only by rounding Cape Bunny, that Ross could carry his vessel into that western sea, from whose waters an isthmus barred him: and this knowledge, traditional as I believe it to have been, has since been proved to be correct by those who wintered in Leopold Harbor finding Esquimaux traces about that neighborhood, and by the foot journey of Sir James Ross, in 1848, round Cape Bunny towards the Magnetic Pole.

In corroboration of my idea that these inhabitants of the Arctic zone were once very numerous

along the north shore of Barrow's Strait and Lancaster Sound, the following localities were found to abound with ruins:—The gulf between Bathurst and Cornwallis Land, the whole southern shore of Cornwallis Island, Wellington Channel, Cape Spenser, and Cape Riley; Radstock Bay, Ommanney Harbor, near Cape Warrender, where the "Intrepid" discovered numerous well-finished graves, bearing the marks of a comparatively more recent date. Passing Cape Warrender, I supposed the remnant of the northern emigration from Asia to have still travelled round the coast; the more so, as at Jones's Sound, the only spot one of our officers happened to land upon, Esquimaux had evidently once lived. The Arctic Highlander, Erasmus York, who was serving in our squadron, seemed to believe his mother to have dwelt about Smith's Sound: all his ideas of things that he had heard of, but not seen, referred to places northward. He knew a musk-ox when shown a sketch of one, and said that they were spoken of by his brethren: with a pencil he could sketch the coast-line northward of where he embarked, Cape York, as far as Whale Sound, or even farther, by tradition; but southward he knew of nothing.

Old whale-fishermen say that, when in former days their pursuit carried them into the head of Baffin's Bay, they found the natives numerous; and it is undoubted that, in spite of an apparently severe mortality amongst these Arctic Highlanders, or Northern Esquimaux, the stock is not yet extinct. Every whaler who has visited the coast northward of Cape York, during late years, reports deserted villages and dead bodies, as if some sudden epidemic had cut down men and women suddenly and in their prime. Our squadron found the same thing. The "Intrepid's" people found in the huts of the natives which were situated close to the winter quarters of "North Star," in Wolstenholme Sound, numerous corpses, unburied, indeed, as if the poor creatures had been suddenly cut off, and their brethren had fled from them. Poor York, who, amongst the dead, recognized his own brother, described the malady of which they died as one of the chest or lungs: at any rate, the mortality was great.

Where did the supply of human life come from? Not from the south, for then the Northern and Southern Esquimaux would have known of each other's existence. Yet the Southern Esquimaux have faint traditions of the head of Baffin's Bay and Lancaster Sound; and Egede and Crantz tell us of their belief in a northern origin, and of their tales of remote regions where beacons on hills had been erected to denote the way. Surely all this points to the long and landward route pursued by this extraordinary people.

It may be quite possible that a portion of the Esquimaux crossed Davis's Straits by accident from the west to the east: such things have occurred within the memory of living men; but I deny that it would ever be a voluntary act, and therefore unlikely to have led to the population of South Greenland. A single hunter of seals, or more, might have been caught in the ice and been drifted across, or a boat's load of women

may have been similarly obliged to perform a voyage which would have been very distasteful to an Esquimaux; but such accidents do not populate countries.

Lastly, before I quit this subject, it would be as well to call the attention of those interested in such questions to the extraordinary fact of the existence of a constantly starving race upon the east side of Greenland. The Danish surveyor's (Capt. Graah) remarks lead me to the opinion that these people come from more northern parts of their own side of Greenland; and it would be a curious circumstance if future geographical discoveries should give us grounds to believe that from the neighborhood of Smith's Sound the Esquimaux migration divided, and the one branch of it followed down the shores of Baffin's Bay and Davis's Straits, whilst the other, tracing the northern coasts of Greenland, eventually descended by the eastern seaboard to Cape Farewell. The nursery, the hot-bed of this race, I believe to exist northward of spots visited by us in Baffin's Strait—for bay it is not, even if it had no other outlets into the Polar Sea than Lancaster, Jones's and Smith's Sound.

